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Inspiring Curiosity and Imagination since 1973



Cricket

Inspiring Curiosity and Imagination since 1973

March 2023 Volume 50 Number 6



PHOTO BY ANNE WILSON

COVER AND BORDER

by Anne Wilson

“Winding Snakes in the Sun”

*monoprinted collaged papers and
Photoshop manipulation*

Anne was born on Ascension Island in the South Atlantic Ocean and now lives in Southern England. Growing up, she loved picture books and one day decided that telling a story through pictures was something she'd quite like to do for a job. Anne studied art, receiving an M.A. in illustration from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, and has now illustrated more than eighteen picture books.

Anne has won many awards for her art. Her colorful, folksy images often feature a host of interesting characters. Teapots sprout legs, bears knit forests of trees, and cats dance around mice. She draws inspiration from nature patterns and colors, and has recently illustrated two books exploring the natural world and its wonders.

Anne's process balances the traditional and digital. Her scalpel, dip pen, and inks sit on her desk side by side with her Wacom tablet, Mac, and Photoshop. She loves the physical processes of color mixing and mark making if they're right for the project. The results are scanned and imported into Photoshop to create a final image.

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CRICKET magazine (ISSN 0090-6034) is published 9 times a year, monthly except for combined May/June, July/August, and November/December issues, by Cricket Media, Inc., 1751 Pinnacle Drive, Suite 600, McLean, VA 22102. Periodicals postage paid at McLean, VA, and at additional mailing offices. For address changes, back issues, subscriptions, customer service, or to renew, please visit shop.cricketmedia.com, email cricketmedia@cdsfulfillment.com, write to CRICKET, P.O. Box 6395, Harlan, IA 51593-1895, or call 1-800-821-0115. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to CRICKET, P.O. Box 6395, Harlan, IA 51593-1895.

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the letterbox

THIS ONE'S
FOR YOU...

MEWY YAY!

Hello!

I am out of town right now. I am actually in Ireland, which is really cool because I've never been on an international flight before and I've always wanted to come here. So far I have been to six bookstores and seen twelve cats ^_^, which means that it is a successful trip. The bookstores are cool because they have all kinds of British/Irish middle-grade books that you don't really see in the U.S. We got to hear a lot of live Celtic fiddling music, which has been fun. I might want to write a story about a selkie when we get back, because they're one of my favorite mythical creatures and they're from Ireland.

Lupine
Ireland

Dear Cricket,

My family used to have a very sweet husky mix named Poly, because she had an extra toe on one foot. She was very social, but she hated other dogs. She got put down a year ago, and we still miss her, though we're hoping to get a puppy and two outdoor cats sometime soon.

Stellar's Jay, age 10
Orcas, Washington

P.S. Marty and Pudding, you're my favorite bugs. Pussywillow, I wish I had you for a friend!

Dear Stellar's Jay,

Losing a beloved pet is sad, but it's part of having one. We hope you're able to remember the good times you had together and smile about them. Pussywillow would love to have you for a pen friend! Write as often as you like. One of us will help her answer your letters.

Love,
Old Cricket

Dear Cricket,

I love Cricket. I have been reading it for about a year now. I love "Ghoulies and Ghosties" by Patricia Bridgman (October 2022). It is my favorite story.

Meredith Bennett
Buchanan, Michigan

SO MANY
GOOD BOOKS
TO READ!



GO,
LIGHTNING
GIRL!

Dear Cricket,

I have a bunch of things to say. First, to Ruby B. (September 2022), I, too, am writing a book with my pen pal (who also reads this awesome magazine), and after we're done, we aim to publish it. Also, the books you mentioned in your letter are some of my total favorites!

To Cricket and everybuggy, your magazine is amazing! I love all the stories—they are beautifully written and richly descriptive! They sparked my imagination and started me writing seriously, for which I will be forever grateful. Thanks a ton!

Renren, a.k.a. Grace, age 11
Oahu, Hawaii

Hi, Everybuggy!

This is my first time writing to the Letterbox. I really like Cricket mag and it's super cool to see so many people who love reading as much as I do! One of my favorite series is Keeper of the Lost Cities. I could not wait for KOTLC #9 to come out! I preordered it.

I'm going to New York soon. Any ideas where to go?

Retro Peach, age 12
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Everybuggy, especially Pussywillow,

Have you tried A Pinch of Magic? I loved reading it, but it is sort of spooky, especially in the second one—A Sprinkle of Sorcery. The book Nuts to You is really good and all about squirrels. And has anyone tried Mismantle? It's similar to Redwall. I also loved The Nine Lives of Jacob Tibbs.

Sasha
North Carolina

Dear Everybuggy,

I love Cricket. My favorite color is pink. My favorite food is mac 'n cheese, only creamy. My hobbies are activity books, gymnastics, reading, cooking, baking, and sometimes I like doing my homework. My favorite book is The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl.

IF UGLY
BIRD ISN'T
UGLY... WHO
IS HE?!

MEWY
HUH?



I've got to say Ugly Bird isn't very ugly.

Amari Stoll, age 8
Goshen, Indiana

Hi, Everybuggy

I am a lover of animals and princesses. My favourite princess is The Little Mermaid. I love singing, dancing, and hugging! I love everybody (except bad guys). I want to have a party to celebrate everybody who does kind things. Princesses will guide the way and show you kindness. Princesses are fun, and you are fun!

Audrey D., age 7
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Ha! I saw a boy at practice today wearing a shirt that said, "Cross-Country: My sport is your sport's punishment." I need that shirt! People just don't appreciate how brutal cross-country is. It and track are the only sports that don't have tryouts, so when I tell people I'm doing cross-country, they smile a wry little grin, and I know what they're thinking is: Oh well, dearie, perhaps you'll make field hockey next year. But the field hockey girls have it easy compared to us. XC workouts are wicked exhausting. For example, today we did hillies—sprint up hill. Jog down hill. Sprint up hill. Jog down hill. And on and on for an hour! It's BRUTAL!

Phoenix Tears, age 13
Down to Earth, Chatterbox

IT'S FUN TO
BE STRONG!
(PUFF-PUFF) IT'S
GOOD TO BE
TOUGH! (HUFF-
PUFF-PUFF!)



Made-up languages chat: Sentence structure could be loose, and you just say the idea/word that first occurs to you, then the rest kinda tumbles out like a waterfall! We could put action first, since ocean-related stuff often has such a feeling of constant flux. Then the noun and the descriptions. It could also be cool to utilize the ocean itself and how it would affect sound. Maybe birds, humanoids, and others who can survive being at the surface for a while must transition underwater to a more whale-like or physical way of communicating. Jaybells
Down to Earth

Maybe there could be some sort of water creature, like a mermaid except cooler, more expanding on the theme of oceans instead of just fish. Maybe they could be shapeshifters! Or seals or otters. Yesss, they could shapeshift into otters.

Miriam H.
Down to Earth

Dear Cricket,

I've been reading your magazine for about a month or so now. I get them from my local library and I love them! I also like looking at the contest entries. I'm in seventh grade and I do cross-country and soccer.

Ladybug and Pussywillow, I think you make a great team! I think it's important to have good friends.

Ziva K., age 13
Flower Mound, Texas

p.s. My favorite athletes are Messi, Mo Salah, Alex Morgan, Sydney McLaughlin, and Megan Rapinoe

Dear Cricket,

I liked "The Christmas Day Kitten" (November/December 2022). I love cats so much! I am hoping to get a Persian cat someday. I also really enjoy the crossbird puzzles. Pussywillow, do you really count as a bug or are you a cat? Or are you a bug-cat?

Katrina
via email

Dear Katrina,

Pussywillow is a pussy willow who magically came to life one day and slid off her bush. She's her own very special, unique creature. She was all alone when we found her, so I adopted her.

Love,
Ladybug (for Pussywillow)

Hello, Fellow Cbers,

I am a fairly new Chatterboxer. I think I know quite a bit about it, except Kyngdom, which seems quite interesting. Victoria of Perelandra (September 2022), I'll eat any brownies that come my way—especially if they're chewy or fudgy.

You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. Kind of the same as: You can lead a Starzzle to Brussels sprouts, but you can't make her eat them. Word to the wise: Starzzle does not eat Brussels sprouts. If offered them, she will politely decline unless forced. Warning: do not force. Reaction is extreme. Examples include severe Brussels sprout stains on walls and permanent sparkles on carpets. Starzzle may only be calmed if fed excessive amounts of brownies for several days. Starzzle's brother,

IF ONLY
BRUSSELS
SPROUTS
TASTED LIKE
ICE CREAM...



SHAPESHIFTING
OTTERS!? I'D READ
THAT STORY.



Cosmos, will also occasionally help calm her. Starzzle will not decline ice cream.

Starzzle, age many moons
Somewhere in the Galaxy

Climate change is serious! The temperature anomaly is getting greater every year, and there's more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Animals are dying!

The whooping cranes that live in wetlands and swamps in the U.S. and Canada lay eggs that have been catching pneumonia and dying unhatched because of increased rain.

Also, the living conditions of some people! In Spanish class we watched a documentary of how the Rarámuri people in the Sierras of Mexico have to walk for hours just to get to school! It's so ironic that people can make movies about these people but can't afford to help them live better lives. It seems like we have become so focused on being the greatest and the best that we've lost sight of our humanity.

Leila, age 11
Down to Earth

Hey, Everybuggy,

I don't think the global warming situation is all bad. At this very minute, I think a scientist is probably working on something to help. If you're concerned, one small thing that would make a big difference is to turn off lights whenever you're not using them. Keep on making this world a "cool" place!

On a very different note, some of my favorite books are by Gavin Brown. I recommend them if you like funny books.

Alia, age 10
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Hello!

I have been getting *Cricket* mag for almost two years now and I really enjoy it! I love to read and I own a ridiculous amount of books. My favorite current series are ... *drum roll* Keeper of the Lost Cities, Wings of Fire, all the books by Rick Riordan, Harry Potter, and Warriors. Midnight (November/December 2022), I also imagine myself as a character in certain books!

Thank you, *Cricket* mag, for being awesome!
Lauren Aalfs, age 13
Frankston, Texas

p.s. Pussywillow, you are BEYOND my favorite!

Hi, Everybuggy!

I am new to Chatterbox, but I have been getting *Cricket* since January 2022. I love dogs and I have a Goldendoodle puppy. My favorite books are Wings of Fire and Keeper of the Lost Cities.

Moonwatcher, age 13
Chirp at Cricket, Chatterbox

CHIRPS FROM CRICKET'S LETTERBOX AND CHATTERBOX

I'm very excited for St. Patrick's Day. It's my favorite holiday (after Christmas)!

Toryn C., age 11
Massachusetts

I love Irish fiddling.

Artemis
Down to Earth

I used to submit Cricket League entries when I was a child and now I am delighted that my daughter has similar interests. She is enjoying your magazine immensely.

Joyce Kelley Clinton

Sybill's Home: Here you'll see a cave with grass and trees growing on its roof. Some roots dangle in front of the entrance. You can see flickers of a small fire from deeper in the cave, and there are voices coming from inside.

Not too far away is a small pond that glitters.

Sybill
Kyngdom

Does anyone else out there play cello? I do and I think cellists aren't recognized as much as they should be.

Dogstar, age 11
Pennsylvania

CELLISTS CAN
ALWAYS RECOGNISE
EACH OTHER—BY
OUR CELLOS, HA HA.



CELEBRATING CRICKET!

Cricket turns fifty in 2023, and your Old Cricket wants all of you to help celebrate our golden anniversary, especially any of you who were loyal readers in *Cricket*'s earlier years. We'd love to hear from you! Maybe you're a parent who remembers curling up with *Cricket* as a child. Or perhaps you're in college now, or embarked on your adult career, but still have fond memories of a favorite story or poem, or the antics of the bug gang. What did *Cricket* mean to you? Write to the Letterbox, and we'll publish as many of your letters as possible in the coming year. Perhaps somebuggy out there even remembers the thrill of getting the very first issue of *Cricket* in the mail. I know I do!

Love,
Old Cricket

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Send letters to **Cricket's Letterbox**,

P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354,
or email us at cricket@cricketmedia.com.
Letters may be edited for length.

Visit the Chatterbox at:
cricketmagkids.com/chatterbox

Cricket Country

WHY DOES EVERYTHING AROUND HERE HAVE TO BE LABELLED "CRICKET COUNTRY" THIS AND "CRICKET COUNTRY" THAT?

MAYBE BECAUSE THIS IS CRICKET MAGAZINE...?

YOU WOULD SAY THAT.

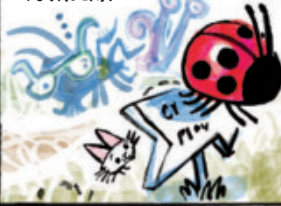


HEY, I DIDN'T PICK THE NAME!

IT'S TRUE—CRICKET WAS NAMED AT THE START BY THE FOUNDERS.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH VARIETY? WHY NOT A LADYBUG SPA, A LADYBUG AMPHITHEATER, A LADYBUG WAY?

YEP! LOTTA VARIETY, THERE. HA!



JUST FOR THAT, I'M OFF TO THE CITY! THE EDITORS' BIG MEETING IS TOMORROW, AND I'M GOING!

UMMM, WHAT'S AN EDITOR?

WAIT—THE EDITORS ARE BEES?

BEES ABOUT TO FEEL THE STING OF MY WRATH! GRRR!

THEY PUT ART AND STORIES TOGETHER TO MAKE THE MAGAZINE WORK. BUSY, BUSY BEES.



BUSY AS BEES. PERHAPS NOT ACTUAL BEES.

PERHAPS? DON'T YOU KNOW WHAT THEY ARE?

THEY WORK BEHIND THE SCENES. SO THEY COULD BE BUSY BEES, OR GHOSTS, OR DRAGONS PRETENDING TO BE BUSY BEES!

OR MONSTERS! KINDA SCARY, IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT.

HA! WE'LL WAIT AND SEE WHO'S SCARED AFTER I LOOK 'EM IN THE EYE AND TELL 'EM WHAT'S WHAT!

RIGHT, PUSS?

MEWY GULP!



THANKS FOR THE LIFT!

WE'VE GOT IMPORTANT BUSINESS IN THE BIG CITY!



... HRRRUMPH.

HEY, YOU! WATCH THE TAIL!

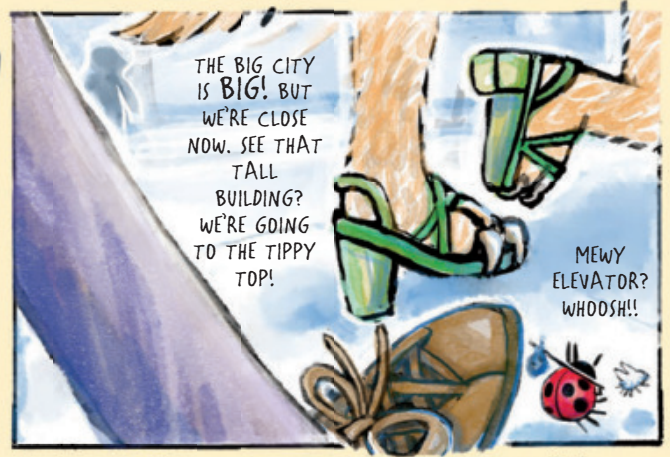
CAREFUL, PUSS.

MEW!



THE BIG CITY IS BIG! BUT WE'RE CLOSE NOW. SEE THAT TALL BUILDING? WE'RE GOING TO THE TIPPY TOP!

MEWY ELEVATOR? WHOOOSH!!



DING!

WE MADE IT! THERE'S THE OFFICE ACROSS THE HALL!

THE EDITORS WILL BE THERE, HAVING THEIR MEETING, ALL UNSUSPECTING... HEH HEH HEH.

MEW!



BET THEY'LL BE SURPRISED TO SEE US... WHOA! STAY BACK, PUSS! SOUNDS LIKE AN UGLY CONVENTION IN THERE. WAIT! NO! COULD IT BE...?

MEWY UGLY MEWY MEETING?

THE EDITORS ARE UGLY BIRDS?!!



AWK! SKWAWK! DEADLINE NOW!!

A Bad Hair Day

BY PARUL SHARMA

“**SAI BABA!** Sai Baba! Sai Baba!
Hahahaha!”

“Today is Shimla’s big day! We have a celebrity visiting our city! Hahahaha!”

Rani’s cheeks burned with humiliation and tears stung her eyes as she elbowed her way to the exit through the crowd of jeering boys in the packed school bus. It wasn’t the first time she’d been called Sai Baba, after the famous Hindu holy man she’d seen on

TV with his trademark afro towering over his head.

But this time *had* to be the worst.

Rani jumped off the school bus. *Splash!* She landed smack in a ditch of muddy rainwater.

It had been a Friday full of disasters.

Angry thoughts swirled inside Rani’s head as she marched home in the drizzling rain.

Why did the rain have to come pelting down so hard just at the end of the school day?

Why did she have to forget her raincoat back home? Why didn’t Tara Hall Girls School

run its own bus to her neighborhood of

Summer Hill? Why did she have to

risk taking the Saint Edward’s

Boys School bus back home to avoid being rain drenched?

Why did her hair have to frizz up like a giant cotton candy balloon just when she wanted it to behave? *Why, why, why,* fumed Rani as she turned the back door key.

“Rani, is that you?” Mama called from the family room.

SAI BABA
WAS A
POPULAR HINDU
RELIGIOUS
LEADER KNOWN
FOR HIS
DISTINCTIVELY
BUSHY HAIR
STYLE.
SHIMLA IS
A CITY IN
NORTHERN
INDIA.



Illustrated by Maithili Joshi

text © 2023 by Parul Sharma, art © 2023 by Maithili Joshi

Suddenly Rani's cousins, Amit and Sumit, came charging toward her.

"How many eggs does Rani have in that nest on her head?" shrieked Amit.

"Let me get that wig off Rani's head!" shouted Sumit, lunging for Rani's hair.

Before she could think, Rani had fled out the door, down the driveway, and back up the road she'd walked down minutes before. Midway up, she slid unseen behind a green curtain of lush bamboo. Tearing through the wild growth, she made her surefooted way down a narrow mud path into a clearing. She flung her schoolbag on the ground and breathed hard.

"I hate my hair!" she cried as tears of rage and shame streamed down her cheeks. Collapsing on her schoolbag, she bitterly remembered the hours, days, and weeks she'd spent trying to tame her hair—from using her grandmother's special blend of coconut and mustard oil to washing it copiously with Sunsilk two-in-one shampoo and conditioner—to no avail.

Before long, the tiring day caught up with Rani, and she fell into a fitful sleep.

"RANI! RAA-AANI!"

Rani woke up to Mama's calls. She lifted her head from her knees. Her eyes roamed absently around the bamboo grove overlooking her house.

"Did you see Rani?" Mama asked Kittoo, Rani's next-door neighbor and after-school playmate.

"No, auntie," said Kittoo. "I haven't seen her after school today."

"She's been gone for hours." Mama sounded anxious. "Where *is* she? I thought she was outdoors playing until late, like she does every Friday. Raa-aani! Raa-aani!"

Rani hugged herself close. *I'll never go home*, she promised herself darkly. *Mama let Amit and Sumit make fun of me.*

The minutes wore on. Alone in her secret hideout, Rani watched the shadows get longer and begin to disappear as dusk fell. She scratched her arms and legs as tiny night bugs bit into her soft flesh. Her body hurt, and hunger pangs wracked her belly.

Suddenly, the leaves rustled. Someone or *something* was making its way into the clearing. Rani froze. She knew about the dangerous animals—the foxes and snakes and even man-eater leopards—that lurked in the jungles of Summer Hill. A shiver went down her spine. She crouched lower, not daring to move a muscle. Suddenly the thick leaves parted, and a dark form stepped into the clearing. Rani's heart leapt with fear. She opened her mouth to scream.

The next moment Papa was kneeling next to her. Relief and joy flooded through Rani. She flung her arms around Papa and clung to him.

"Rani! What are you doing here?" a visibly relieved Papa asked. "Everyone's been looking all over the place for you. You *know* the rule is to be home before dark, don't you? Come, let's go home."

"No." Rani's voice quivered.

"Come on, Rani." Papa sounded tired.



COPIOUSLY MEANS
IN LARGE AMOUNTS.

Rani shook her head. A lone tear slid down her cheek.

"What's wrong, my child?" Papa asked gently.

"Everything!" Rani blurted out. More tears streamed down her face. "I hate my hair!"

"Why, your hair's beautiful."

Rani shook her head vigorously. "Then why does everyone make fun of it all the time?"

"Maybe because it's so distinct and striking," said Papa, stroking Rani's disheveled hair.

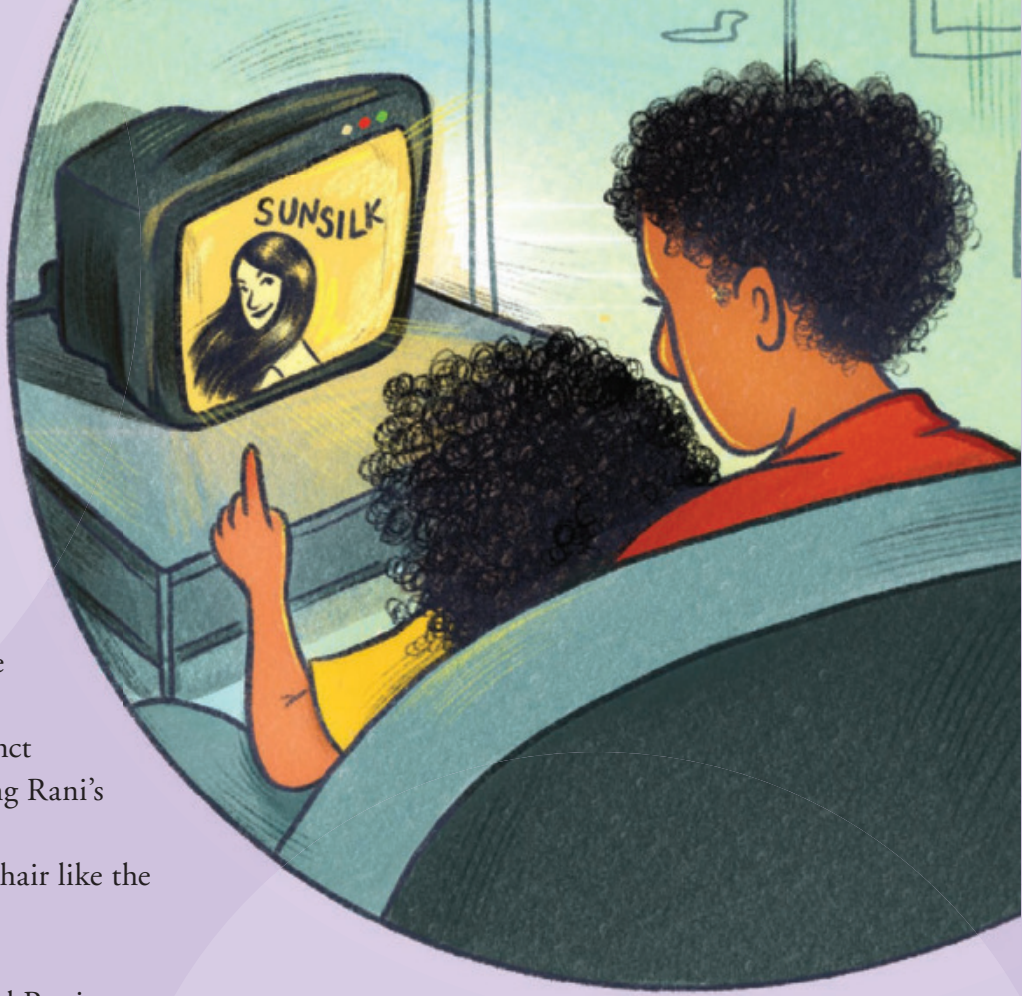
"Why can't *I* have flowing hair like the Sunsilk girl's hair?" said Rani.

"Whose hair?"

"The Sunsilk girl's," repeated Rani. "Haven't you seen her on television?" she asked incredulously. "But Mama says even if I shampoo my hair with Sunsilk every day, I won't get silky hair," she continued without waiting for Papa's answer. "Is that true?"

Papa sighed. He hugged Rani and rubbed her back soothingly.

Rani burrowed her face in Papa's shoulder. "Today the boys from Saint Edward's School teased me about my hair on the bus ride back home," she said after a long pause. "They called me Sai Baba." She tore at her hair and pulled out a couple of paper pellets stuck in it. "Look, they even shot pellets at my hair with their rubber band catapults!" Her eyes welled up with tears. "And that's



not all," she sobbed. "When I got back, Amit and Sumit were home and they picked on my hair as usual, and Mama let them get away with it."

"Is that why you've been hiding here?" Papa pulled his head back and looked at Rani. "Those boys on the school bus are bullies, my girl," he said quietly. "They put you down because they knew you were outnumbered and wouldn't be able to stand up to them. But you know something? You're better and smarter than all of them put together." Papa's warm breath caressed Rani's cheeks as he planted a soft kiss on her forehead. "Right?"

STRIKING MEANS
IMPRESSIVE AND
ATTRACTIVE.



INCREDULOUSLY MEANS
IN DISBELIEF.



Rani nodded uncertainly.

“That’s like my girl,” said Papa. He lifted Rani in his strong arms and started to make his way out of the bamboo grove. “And don’t worry about those pests Amit and Sumit. They’ve long left.”

Rani smiled and soaked up the safety of being in Papa’s arms.

“Papa?” she murmured, as they approached home.

“H’m?”

“I don’t want to participate in the inter-school elocution competition on Monday.”

“Why?” Papa sounded puzzled. “You’ve put your heart and soul into practicing for it all these past months.”

Yes, Rani wanted to say. *All I’ve dreamed of is to represent my school on that stage and be the best public speaker ever.*

Instead, she whispered, “I messed up big time at rehearsal today. I . . . I’ve been messing up regularly . . . a lot. I want to opt out.” Rani’s words came fast on each other’s heels. “Can you tell my teacher I’ve been taken seriously ill? Please?” Rani sounded desperate.

Papa was quiet for several moments. The only sound Rani heard was the steady *crunch-crunch* of his feet on the gravel. “Making up lies is not how we solve problems, Rani,” he finally said. He slowed down and scanned Rani’s face. His eyes searched hers. “Last I knew my Rani was never one to shy away from a challenge. This doesn’t have anything to do with those bullies, does it?”

“Nuh-uh,” Rani mumbled as her eyes darted away from Papa’s.

“Let’s not worry about it right now, OK?” said Papa. “It’s time for dinner, and Mama’s waiting for you.” He picked up his pace and waved to Mama standing at the doorstep.

As they entered home, the savory aroma of semolina and nuts fried in ghee greeted Rani. Hot oil sizzled in a wok as Mama fried fresh *pooris*. *Halwa-poori!* Rani’s favorite dish! Yum! Rani forgot her woes as the buttery-sweet halwa and fluffy *pooris* melted in her mouth.

After having her heart’s fill, Rani curled up next to Papa for her favorite Friday evening Bollywood song TV show to come on. Her eyes glazed over the evening news images and began to grow heavy with sleep.

Suddenly Papa nudged Rani. “Watch and listen!” he said intently.

Rani rubbed her eyes and sat up.

“That’s our prime minister representing India at the United Nations General Assembly,” said Papa, his eyes fixed on the TV.

The awe and admiration in his voice were unmistakable.

Rani watched the poised woman standing proud and dignified at a podium before a large assembly of world leaders.

“We want global cooperation for development on the basis of mutual benefit,” the prime minister’s voice rang out strong and clear and resonant. “We want to recognize and preserve the world’s diversity. We want peace because peace is indispensable; because humankind now has the choice, the





knowledge, and the power to prevent the calamity of extinction.”

The audience stood up and broke into loud applause.

Papa looked at Rani. “You have the ability to be like *that* woman one day,” he said, pointing to the television.

Rani heard the quiet conviction in Papa’s voice. An odd mixture of confusion and pleasure welled up inside her.

As Papa went back to watching the news, she slid away to the bedroom and propped herself on the stool facing Mama’s dresser. She stared at her reflection in the mirror. Her thick black curls towered over her head in their wild splendor.

Rani closed her eyes. The Sunsilk girl with her long flowing tresses appeared. But before Rani could stop her, she drifted away and disappeared like a wispy cloud. In her place emerged a woman who’d never appeared in Rani’s imagination. She had crisp short hair, intelligent eyes, and a warm smile.

Rani opened her eyes. She shivered. Just the thought of carrying herself—of *being*—like Madam Prime Minister filled her with a surge of fearless pride.

MONDAY MORNING
DAWNED bright and clear. Rani braced herself for her big day.


“Looks like someone made a trip to the barber! Hahahaha!”

“Wonder what a *boy’s* doing in a girls’ school?”

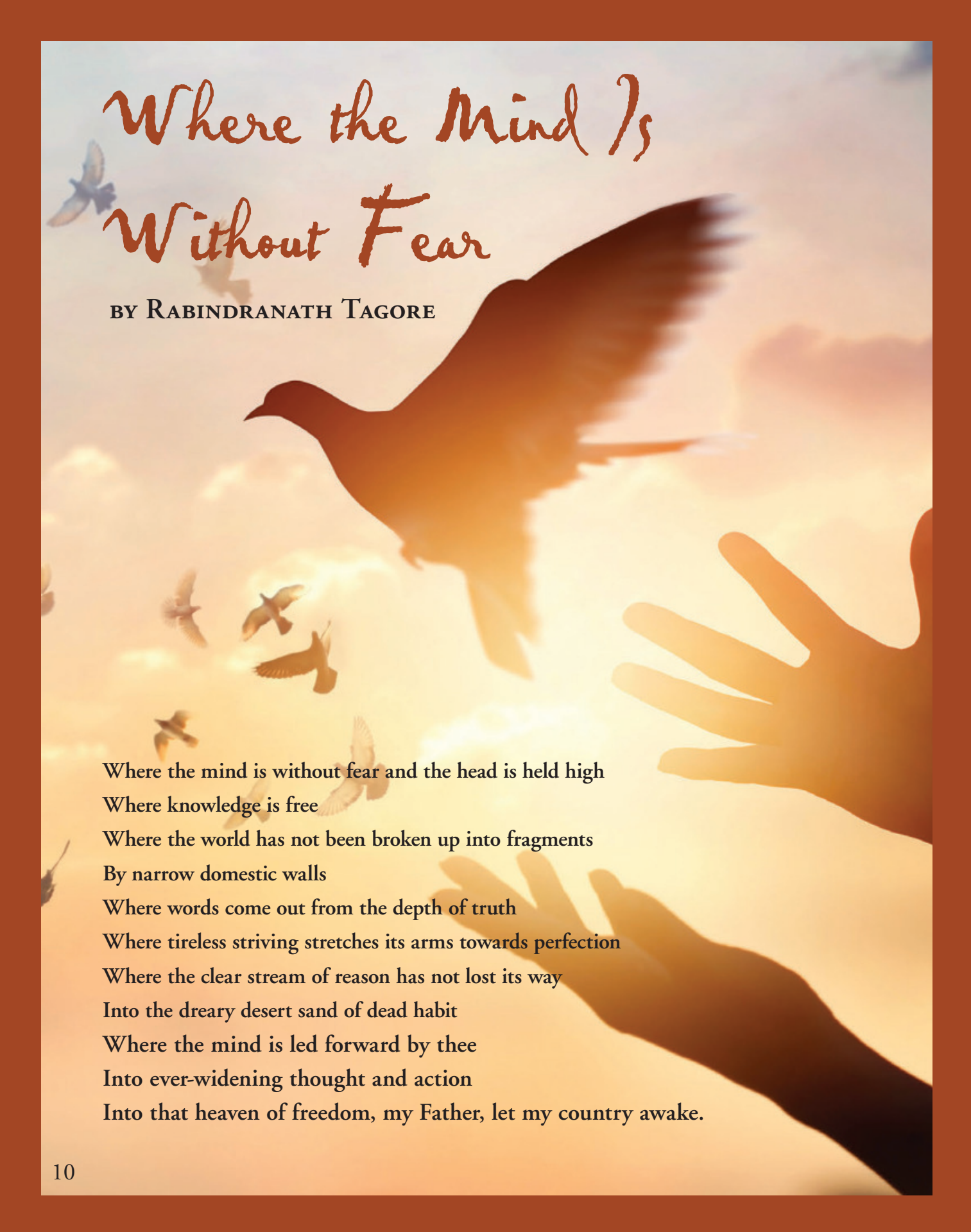
“Tomboy Rani! Hahahaha!”

Rani threw back her shoulders and held her head high as she walked past the whispered barbs and stifled laughter aimed at her brand-new haircut. She strode across the stage and took her place at the podium. Her face shone and her eyes glittered as she summoned her inner prime minister.

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high.” Her voice rang out strong and clear and resonant as she started reciting Rabindranath Tagore’s famous poem.

And right then, she knew she’d won. 



The background of the page is a warm, golden sunset sky. A large, dark silhouette of a dove is in flight, wings spread wide, moving from the left towards the center. Several smaller birds are also visible in flight. In the lower right corner, two hands are reaching upwards, palms open, towards the dove. The overall mood is one of hope and aspiration.

Where the Mind Is Without Fear

BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.



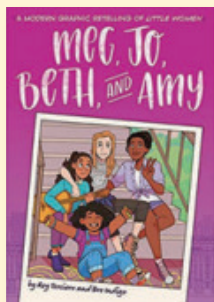
The Narroway Trilogy

by Rhiannon Williams

This fantastic feminist fantasy series tells the story of young Otilie Colter, who disguises herself as a boy to rescue her younger brother, Gully, from a society that kidnaps boys and trains them to hunt dredretches, evil monsters created by broken promises. Otilie Colter is a fantastic heroine, and all the other characters are built amazingly as well. Go read the books if you haven't read them!



Wolf Walker, age 12
Portland, Oregon



Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy

(Classic Graphic Remix, Book 1)
by Rey Terciero and Bre Indigo

Ya know how it's the month of March? This

great book is a modern retelling of *Little Women* (by Louis May Alcott), which is the story of the March sisters. I think the sisters in *Meg, Jo, Beth,*

and *Amy* are younger than they were in *Little Women*. Also, the authors add another element that wasn't in the original: racism. It's a graphic novel, and you should read it!

Rainbow, age 12
Down to Earth, Chatterbox

The Rogue Crew: A Tale from Redwall

by Brian Jacques

Eulaliiiiiiaaaaaa!
S'death on the wind!
Rake Nightfur's patrol charged the bewildered lizards and shrews. What happens next is a secret till you read the book. Trust me, 'tis the best book ever!

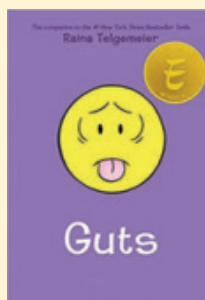


Rosie CapDeville, age 9
South Bend, Indiana

Guts

by Raina Telgemeier

A girl named Raina wakes up one night with a horrible stomach-ache. She goes to school and doesn't fit in well. She has friends but also nonfriends. She



is afraid of certain foods and won't eat different varieties of food. She always worries about food, family, and friends. Panic attacks come out of nowhere. She goes to a therapist because her anxiety is bad. I absolutely loved this book and I really recommend it.

Kitty Cat, age 11
cricketmagkids.com/books

The Mysterious Benedict Society (The Mysterious Benedict Society, Book 1)

by Trenton Lee Stewart

When Reynie Muldoon takes a mysterious test, he never expects that it will result in a secret mission to save the world from being swallowed by lies! Together with Sticky Washington, Kate Wetherall, and the tiny Constance Contraire, Reynie must race to stop Mr. Curtain and his brainwashing machine, the Whisperer, before it's too late. This is honestly one of the most well-written books I have ever read, and I highly recommend it!



Kamalama M., age 13
Kaupo, Hawaii

Do you have a favorite book? Email your review (75 words or less) to cricket@cricketmagkids.com or mail to Cricket Readers Recommend, P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354. Please include your name, age, and address. Visit Cricket Readers Recommend online at www.cricketmagkids.com or Blab About Books at www.cricketmagkids.com/chatterbox.

How Krishna Vanquished Kaaliya

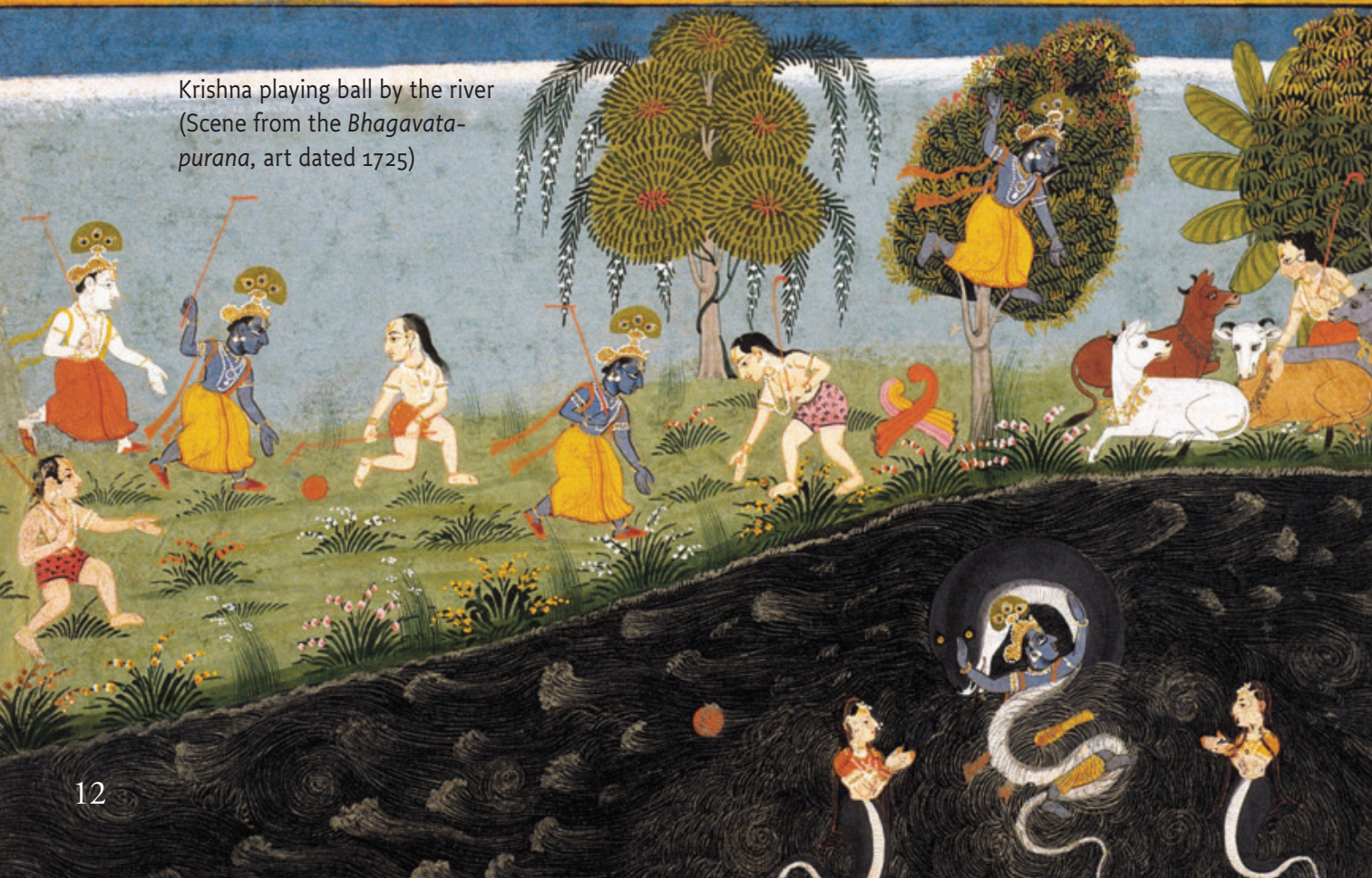
A Hindu tale retold by Deepa Agarwal

KRISHNA WAS A god, the reincarnation of Lord Vishnu. When he was born in human form, his foster parents, Yashoda and Nanda, brought him up in Vrindavan, a village on the plains of North India. Most of the people who lived there were dairy farmers. But, apart from his family, no one knew that the mischievous boy who just loved to eat butter had divine powers.

Every day, Krishna would set out for the pastures with his father's herd of cows. While the cows grazed, Krishna and his fellow herders whiled away their time playing games.

One day Krishna and the other boys were tossing a ball around on the banks of the Yamuna River. One of them flung it so high into the air that no one could catch it. The ball sailed above their heads and plunged into the river.

Krishna playing ball by the river
(Scene from the *Bhagavata-purana*, art dated 1725)



The boys shouted out in dismay. They ran to the spot where the ball had entered the water and stared with fearful eyes at the frothing and boiling river.

"What are we going to do now?" one wailed. "Our ball is lost forever."

"We were having so much fun!" another groaned.

"All we need to do is to jump in and fetch it," said Krishna with a laugh.

The boys stared at him, open mouthed.

"Are you crazy?" one asked finally.

"You have to be joking," said another, shaking his head.

There was real reason to avoid the river. A monstrous *naga*, or snake, named Kaaliya had made his home in it. The snake was so venomous that the water bubbled with its poison for miles around. In fact, the whole river had been blighted by the serpent's fumes, and not a single bird or beast dared to go near. Only a lone kadamba tree had managed to survive on the bank.

"Friends, I'm perfectly serious," Krishna insisted. "I'm going to dive into the river and bring our ball back."

"Please, Krishna, don't do anything so foolish!" his companions exclaimed as one. They surrounded him in a protective circle. "You're not going into the river. That's final!"

Krishna pushed his friends away, gently but firmly. "No, I have to go and get the ball," he said. Before anyone could stop him, he dove into the water.

Kaaliya was lying at the bottom of the river, his favorite spot. He heard the splash.

"Who is this impertinent boy who dares to enter my abode?" he hissed. "I will teach him and the rest of these foolish cowherds a lesson they'll never forget."

With the speed of lightning, he twisted his huge frame through the river and stuck his one hundred and ten heads above the water. The monstrous snake dripping venom was such a fearsome sight that the cowherds screamed in terror. Their cows, too, ran in all directions, bellowing in fright.

Before their horrified gaze, Kaaliya coiled himself around Krishna and began to crush him.

"Help! He has caught Krishna." The cowherds wailed and wrung their hands helplessly. "Oh! Why did he dive into the river?"

"What shall we do? We told him not to go in there!" one cried.

"Let's get his parents and brother!" said another.

The boys rushed to the village.

Krishna's mother, Yashoda, almost collapsed when she heard the news. "That monster's captured my son!" she cried.

"We must go immediately!" His father, Nanda, sprang up. "Come, Balaram," he called to Krishna's brother.

In the meantime, Kaaliya was gleefully tightening his grip on Krishna. When his victim showed no reaction, the snake was extremely puzzled. By now the boy should

LORD VISHNU IS ONE OF THE HOLY TRINITY OF HINDU GODS: BRAHMA THE CREATOR, VISHNU THE PRESERVER, AND SHIVA THE DESTROYER.



THE KADAMBA, LORD VISHNU'S FAVORITE TREE, IS A TROPICAL EVERGREEN WITH GLOBE-SHAPED CLUSTERS OF SCENTED ORANGE FLOWERS.

WOW! KRISHNA'S BODY BECAME EQUAL
TO THE WEIGHT OF THE WHOLE UNIVERSE!
THAT'S A LOT!



HEAVIER THAN ANYTHING, ER,
EVERYTHING.

have been screaming in agony; his bones should have crumbled to pieces. Annoyed, Kaaliya squeezed harder, but Krishna's body felt as solid as the firmest rock. Kaaliya could not crush Krishna the way he had crushed so many unwary animals to death.

Frustrated, the serpent exerted all the strength he possessed. He had to break Krishna's bones! But the boy seemed indestructible. Enraged, Kaaliya began to squirt venom from each and every one of his hundred and ten mouths. To his dismay, the poison trickled down Krishna's body harmlessly, like sweet honey.

By this time, Krishna's terrified parents, Nanda and Yashoda, had arrived at the riverbank with the rest of the villagers. Everyone watched the battle, trembling with anxiety. Only one person was confident that Krishna would overpower the dreadful serpent. It was his older brother, Balaram, who was himself an incarnation of a god.

"Kaaliya will not be able to harm Krishna," he said with a knowing smile.

"Is that possible?" said one of the villagers. "Don't we know how deadly Kaaliya is?"

Balaram proved right, however.

At that moment Krishna decided it was time to reveal his true identity. With the help of his divine powers, he expanded in size. His body grew and grew till he became so enormous that Kaaliya could not grip him any longer.

As the whole village watched, breathless with terror, Krishna emerged from the

Yamuna, standing on the monstrous Kaaliya's heads. He was larger than the serpent now. The weight of his body had become equal to the weight of the whole universe!

The crowd gazed at him awestruck, unable to believe their eyes.

"Look, look!" cried one of the boys. "Krishna is dancing on Kaaliya's heads!"

Sure enough, Krishna was prancing about lightly on all the hundred and ten hoods of the naga. Kaaliya hissed and shook his heads violently. His tongues darted in and out, spitting venom. But how could he hold up the weight of the whole universe? Very soon, the fearsome Kaaliya began to thrash about helplessly. Vomit and blood streamed from his mouths.

Kaaliya's end was approaching. His wives, who had been watching the battle, rose from the river, weeping and wailing. They fell on the ground in front of Krishna.

"Spare him, Lord Krishna!" they cried. "He will never attack a human again."

Krishna took pity on them and stepped off Kaaliya's heads.

The broken serpent began to breathe again. When he was in a condition to speak, he apologized to Krishna. "Please forgive me, Lord," he said in a trembling voice. "If only I had known who you were, I would not have dared to attack you. I beg for mercy. Please grant me my life."

"You came to this peaceful place and ruined the river with your venom," Krishna said sternly. "You drove many living creatures

Krishna dancing on
the head of Kaaliya as
Kaaliya's wives plead for
mercy (Lithograph, 1890)



away from their homes and threatened anyone who came near the Yamuna. I am not sure if I should let you go.”

“Lord, I accept that I did wrong. But we serpents have suffered, too,” pleaded Kaaliya. “For years we lived on Ramanaka, our own island. But the divine bird Garuda, our sworn enemy, found us. He attacked us ferociously and destroyed our whole community. We fled to Vrindavan to save our lives, knowing that Garuda would never come here. I admit my mistake. I’m really sorry that I drove so many creatures away and poisoned the water.”

“I will spare your life only if you promise to leave Vrindavan,” Lord Krishna said. “Go back to Ramanaka with your family and live there in peace. If Garuda tries to attack you, show him the imprint of my feet on your hoods. It will be a sign for him to spare you.”

Kaaliya and his wives bowed low to Krishna. “You are truly great, Lord,” Kaaliya said. “I will never return to Vrindavan or trouble any other being.” Kaaliya turned to the watching people and said, “Forgive me, friends, for my past



Garuda, the enemy of snakes, painted in traditional Bhutanese style

behavior. I promise never to do anything like this again.”

Kaaliya and his family departed from Vrindavan, and soon, the poison disappeared from the Yamuna River. Birds and animals thronged its banks, and the villagers could draw water and bathe without fear. Best of all, the cowherds could play ball there freely.

But everyone looked at Krishna with awestruck eyes now. A god lived in their midst, a god who protected them. They had no need to fear anyone or anything. How lucky they were! 🐛

THE RIVER WAS POLLUTED, AND NOW
IT'S CLEAN FOR EVERYBUGGY TO USE.



WHAT A REMARKABLE BOY!
THANK YOU, KRISHNA!

ELLEN and the *FLYING Cloud*

by Sally Lee

THE RACE AGAINST time began the moment *Flying Cloud*'s anchor broke the surface of the water in New York Harbor. Acres of white sails caught the wind on June 2, 1851, as the ship glided toward the Atlantic Ocean on its maiden voyage. Its 16,000-mile journey would take it around the tip of South America and up to San Francisco. No one knew if the untested ship could withstand the angry seas and violent storms it would encounter. Still, hopes were high that *Flying Cloud* would not only make the journey safely but would make it in record time.

By 1851 the Gold Rush was in full swing. Thousands of fortune hunters flocked to the gold fields of California. Most spent four to six months in wagon trains snaking across the desolate Great Plains and over the Rocky Mountains. But merchants needed a faster way to get their goods to the growing population in the West. Clipper ships, with their long sleek bodies and abundance of sails, were known for their speed. Competition developed between

ship builders, owners, and captains to have the fastest ships. Large bets were placed on the favorites, turning every voyage into a race. The current record holder was the *Surprise*, which had made the New York to San Francisco trip in ninety-six days. The pressure was on *Flying Cloud* to beat that record.



Eleanor "Ellen" Creesy stood on *Flying Cloud*'s deck, savoring the moment. As the ship's navigator, she would play an important role in the success or failure of the voyage. It would be her responsibility to keep track of the ship's progress and current position and to plan the best course for it to follow.

Being a woman made Ellen an unusual navigator. At that time, only men held that position.

As the daughter of a ship's captain, Ellen was raised to love the sea. Her father taught her about wind, weather, and ocean currents. She learned to use navigation instruments and to do the complicated math calculations to determine a ship's position. Townspeople called her father foolish for teaching his daughter a

Illustrated by Dennis Auth

text © 2023 by Sally Lee, art © 2023 by Dennis Auth

WITH THIS SEXTANT I CAN CALCULATE ...
OUR EXACT POSITION.



... BUT I KNOW MY EXACT POSITION.
I'M RIGHT HERE!

man's job. Women were expected to become wives and mothers and rarely held responsible positions outside the home. But Ellen's sharp mind and adventurous spirit demanded a different kind of life. Her dream came true when she met Perkins Creesy, a young ship's captain. After their marriage, Ellen became the navigator of his ships. They spent ten years sailing merchant ships to China. Then Perkins became captain of the *Flying Cloud*.

Ellen's job was time consuming. Several times a day, she focused her sextant on the sun, moon, or stars to measure their angle above the horizon. Using her measurements, she could calculate *Flying Cloud*'s latitude and longitude to learn the ship's exact position (or fix) in the vast ocean. If the heavenly bodies were hidden by clouds or darkness, she made an educated guess, called dead reckoning, to estimate the ship's present location. Her estimate was based on the last known position of the ship, its speed and compass heading, and the amount of time that had passed since the last fix. Ellen

recorded their progress from noon one day to noon the next on her chart. She plotted courses to take advantage of good winds and currents or to avoid storms and other hazards.

By the fifth day out of New York, *Flying Cloud* had traveled 830 miles at a good speed. But as Ellen and Perkins were enjoying a mid-day meal with their eleven passengers, disaster struck. A thunderous crash came from above. *Flying Cloud* pitched to the side, sending dishes and glassware clattering to the floor as servers struggled to keep their balance. More overhead crashes, shouts, and pounding boots followed.

Perkins and Ellen dashed up the stairs. They found *Flying Cloud*'s deck in shambles. The top part of the mainmast, the tallest of the ship's three masts, had broken off, taking the top of another mast with it. The splintered poles were tangled in the rigging and swung dangerously overhead. At any moment, tons of wood, iron, and canvas could plunge to the deck. Perkins ordered the crew to climb up into the rigging to lower the broken pieces.



THE DOLDRUMS CAN ALSO REFER TO A
STATE OF INACTIVITY AND STAGNATION,
OR FEELING DULL AND LISTLESS.



Perkins and Ellen were discouraged. The journey was just beginning, and their ship was already damaged. The masts could be repaired, but could they withstand the high winds that lay ahead? Hopes that *Flying Cloud* would break any speed records dimmed.

After taking two days to repair the damaged masts and sails, *Flying Cloud* headed toward its next challenge. The ship was approaching the doldrums, an area near the equator with little or no wind. Sailing ships could be stranded in the doldrums for days or even weeks waiting for enough wind to push them ahead. But Ellen had a plan she hoped would get them through faster.

In preparing for their voyage, Ellen had studied charts and sailing directions compiled through careful scientific research by U.S. Navy Lieutenant Matthew Fontaine Maury. They showed routes used by hundreds of ships around the world and, for the first time, included valuable insights and extensive information on the winds and ocean currents

at different times of the year. Using Maury's new charts, Ellen chose a course different from the ones ships normally used. This required a faith in science that most seamen didn't have at that time. Her plan worked. Three days later *Flying Cloud* sailed out of the doldrums. "We have passed the equator in two less days than ever before," Perkins recorded in his log.

Passing the equator marked the end of the first leg of their journey. *Flying Cloud* left summer behind and sailed into the Southern Hemisphere's winter. The days grew shorter, and temperatures dropped. Storms became more violent. Long nights and cloudy skies made Ellen's job even more difficult. With the sun, moon, and stars hidden, she had to rely on less-precise dead reckoning to plot the ship's position. This required a combination of skill, experience, and intuition. Luckily, Ellen had them all.

As *Flying Cloud* neared the port in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Ellen and Perkins were faced



with a difficult decision. Should they stop in Rio to get their mast fully repaired, or keep going in hopes that it would hold up for the rest of their voyage? They had the safety of their passengers and crew to consider. But stopping for repairs would cost them several days. Ellen knew what beating the speed record meant to her husband's reputation. She also couldn't deny her own competitive nature. They decided to keep going.

A week later the main mast split again as *Flying Cloud* fought its way through a three-day storm. Powerful wind gusts slammed into the ship, tipping it sideways. Thirty-foot waves crashed over the deck. Perkins and his crew lashed themselves to the rails to keep from being washed overboard. The raging storm and lack of daylight made it impossible for Ellen to know how far off course the ship had been pushed toward the rocky coast. She set a new course further out to sea to wait out the storm.

The split mast was a setback for Perkins, who knew he would not be able to push *Flying Cloud* as hard as he wanted. Every storm brought the fear that the wind and extra weight of soggy sails would damage the masts beyond repair. To make matters worse, they had not yet reached the most dreaded part of their voyage—rounding Cape Horn at the tip of South America. Sailors called the ocean around Cape Horn “the devil's best mess” because so many ships had been destroyed by violent winds, giant waves, and unseen icebergs. If Cape Horn lived up to their expectations, things were going to get worse instead of better.

Ellen knew that the fastest way to get to Cape Horn was through the Strait of Le Maire. But it was risky. The narrow strip of water was only fourteen miles wide with rocky coasts on both sides. It would not be a problem on a clear day. But *Flying Cloud* was hit with their worst storm yet. The ship rolled and pitched as powerful winds and heavy snow swirled around them. All fires on board had to be extinguished, leaving passengers shivering in total darkness with only cold food to eat. Between the blinding snow and the lack of daylight, visibility was cut to almost nothing. No one could see if the clipper was too close to the rocky shore or if there were floating icebergs looming ahead.

Ellen again used dead reckoning to plot a course she hoped would take the *Flying Cloud* toward the entrance to the strait. But what if she was wrong? The clipper could be blown onto the rocks, killing everyone aboard. Although Perkins didn't want to waste time by giving up the miles they had already covered, the consequences of a wrong decision were too great. Ellen finally convinced him that the safety of their passengers and crew was more important than speed. When the skies cleared, Ellen was relieved to see that they were right where they should be.

On July 22, *Flying Cloud* got a lucky break. Winds coming from the east pushed the ship through the strait. The next day it sailed around Cape Horn and into the Pacific Ocean with no problems. It raced north up the coast of South America, leaving winter behind. On July 31, *Flying Cloud* covered 374



SLOW BUT SURE
WINS THE RACE!



BUT SOMETIMES JUST GOING FAST
IS BETTER!




miles in a twenty-four-hour period. It was the fastest a clipper ship had ever sailed.

Excitement grew as the end of their tedious journey neared. At eleven-thirty the morning of August 31, 1851, *Flying Cloud* sailed majestically into San Francisco Bay. The grand ship had completed its voyage in eighty-nine days and twenty-one hours, beating *Surprise's* record by an entire week.

Crowds gathered on the beach to watch *Flying Cloud's* arrival. News of the broken record spread quickly, making Ellen and Perkins instant celebrities. Three years later, they shaved thirteen hours off their own record by making the same trip in eighty-nine days and eight hours. That record for a sailboat held for 135 years, until it was beaten by

a smaller racing yacht in 1989. Ellen's achievements were recognized in newspapers across the country, including the *Daily Californian*:

The story of Flying Cloud is exciting in itself, but equally intriguing is the fact that the navigator was a woman—the Captain's wife, Eleanor Creesy. Remarkable for being a functioning female member of the clipper's crew, she was also an inspired navigator. Her skills are considered to be a major factor in the ship's safe and swift passages.

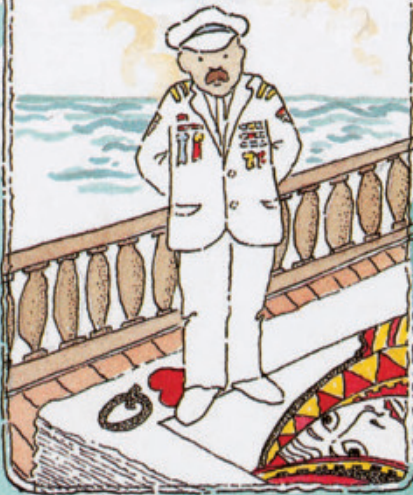
Ellen Creesy had the intelligence to master her skills, the courage to try new scientific techniques, and the determination to keep going through setbacks. She not only succeeded in a man's job, she surpassed the best of them. 



Seasick Sailing Riddles

When is a store like a ship?
When it has sales

Why couldn't the sailors
play cards?
*Because the captain was
standing on the deck*



Where do sick steamships go?
To the dock

What did the sailor say to the captain
after he fell overboard?
"Drop me a line."

How does a sailor get her
clothes clean?
*She throws them
overboard, and they
wash ashore.*



What did the baby sardine say when she saw
a submarine?
"Look, Mom, a can of people!"

How often do ships sink?
Only once

What lies at the bottom of the sea and shivers?
A nervous wreck



An illustration of a village scene. In the upper left, there are several traditional Chinese houses with tiled roofs and white walls, nestled among green trees. A stone wall runs along the edge of the village. Below the wall, a wide, calm river flows. A small figure of a person stands on the riverbank. In the foreground, several long, narrow fishing boats with red cylindrical covers are on the water, each with a person inside. The water is depicted with blue and green wavy lines, suggesting movement and depth. The overall style is that of a children's book illustration, with soft colors and a gentle atmosphere.

The Silent One

by Phillis Gershator

In the spring of the year 960, on the twenty-third day of the third month, a brilliant light shone in the northwest, and a baby girl was born to a fisherman's family in Fujian Province.

The girl was such a quiet, watchful child, her parents called her Mo Niang, the Silent One.

As she grew older, Mo Niang played on the beach with her brothers, who taught her to swim. Even before she learned to talk, Mo Niang could swim like a sleek, swift fish.

When her brothers went fishing with their father, Mo Niang stayed on shore alone. She was too young to go fishing. Silently, she waved goodbye as they sailed off in their little boat.

One morning, when Mo Niang was six years old, she raised her voice. She begged her father not to go to sea. "Papa, please," she cried, "stay home today. Please don't go!"

She spoke so rarely, her father listened, surprised, but then he said, "Stop crying, daughter. We'll be back before nightfall with a net full of fish. A big girl doesn't cry when her father goes fishing."

"No, don't go," she sobbed. But her father and brothers ignored her and sailed out to sea.

Mo Niang stood sadly at the water's edge, straining to see her father's boat in the distance, among all the other fishing boats.

Illustrated by Nicole Wong

text © 2023 by Phillis Gershator, art © 2023 by Nicole Wong



Clouds blackened the sky, and a great wind blew across the sea. Lightning crackled through the clouds, illuminating waves that rose from the sea like jagged mountains. Above the sound of thunder and crashing waves, Mo Niang could hear the boats cracking and the fishermen crying for help.

Mo Niang dove into the sea. She saw her brothers thrashing this way and that, trying to stay afloat, trying to save each other. She reached for them, and kicking with all her might, she pulled them back to shore.

But where was Father?

Mo Niang dove back into the sea. She found her father clinging to a piece of wood from his shattered boat. Mo Niang grasped the wood with one hand and paddled with the other, until she reached the shallows and staggered onto the sand.

"You saved us!" marveled her brothers. Tears of joy streamed from their eyes. "You saved Father!"

"Mo Niang was right this morning," Father said. "We should not have gone to sea today. We lost our boat. If not for her strength and courage, we would have lost our lives, too."

Mo Niang didn't say a word.

Back home, Mo Niang's oldest brother announced, "Our

sister deserves something special. She risked her life to save us."

"Tell us what you'd like, Mo Niang, and we will get it for you," promised her second brother.

The Silent One spoke up. She said, "I would like to go to school."

"School?" her parents exclaimed.

"Fisherfolk's daughters don't go to school."

The Silent One was silent.

But when she was seven, Mo Niang did go to school. She learned to read and write, as all students must, and as the years went by, she studied religious and philosophical



writings, until one day she refused to leave the house. She begged her father and brothers to stay home with her.

"Papa," she cried, "don't go fishing today. I'm afraid. Please stay home."

Her father trusted Mo Niang now. He advised the other fishermen to stay home, too. "Remember the terrible storm five years ago?" he said. "That was the very day my daughter told me not to go out to sea. I didn't listen to her. I lost my boat, and my sons and I nearly drowned."

But he couldn't convince his fellow fisherman to listen to the words of a young girl.

"That was a coincidence," they told him. "We can tell if a storm is brewing or not. Look up! The sky is clear. The wind is mild, a perfect day for catching fish."

Mo Niang stood on the shore, watching the fishermen sail out to sea. She wore her red blouse. Her loose red and black trousers flapped against her legs in the breeze. The

breeze grew stronger. The choppy waves rose higher and higher. Heavy clouds blew in all at once from every direction, and the blue sky turned dark with clouds and rain.

The fishermen tried to head back to shore. Some of the boats were already so battered and broken by the wind-tossed waves they could not return.

Mo Niang dove into the water.

Later, when the storm abated, and Mo Niang still hadn't come home, her father ran along the beach to look for her. He called her name, over and over. "Mo Niang! Mo Niang!"

"Your daughter saved my life," one fisherman after another told him.

"Where is she?" he cried. "Where is she?" At last he saw her, lying like a red fish on the sand, gasping for breath.

She breathed! Mo Niang was alive! Her father tenderly picked her up and carried her home.



From then on, the grateful fisherfolk loved her like a daughter. They listened to her when she predicted bad weather, even if the sky was blue and the sun bright. And when they were not fishing or mending nets, the old folks taught Mo Niang to use healing herbs and set broken bones.

By the time she grew up, Mo Niang had learned how to care for the sick. She was a familiar sight in her red blouse and black-and-red trousers, rushing through the village with her long hair neatly pinned up at the back of her head like a sail.

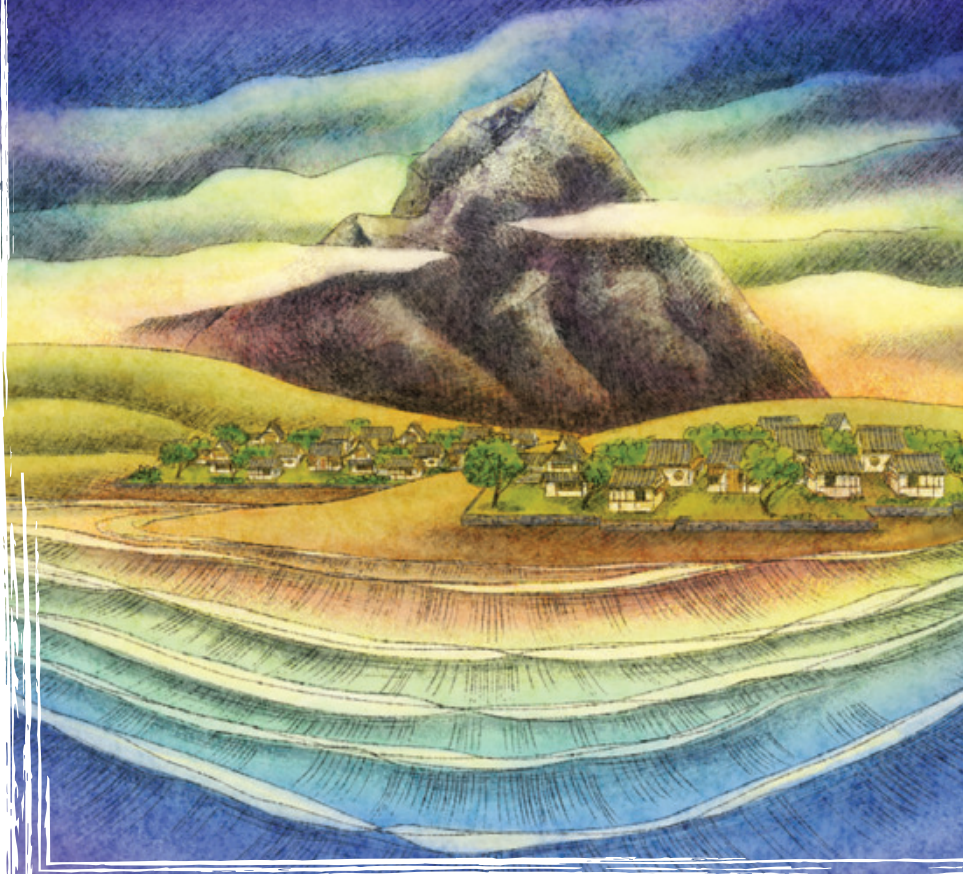
At the age of twenty-eight, Mo Niang herself became ill. She told her mother, "I see clouds coming, all colors, shining like jewels. I may leave you soon, but do not cry for me."

"What do you mean?"

"When I die, I will rise up and travel over the mountains and waves, into the rain clouds and the sunlight. I will watch over you and my brothers from above. I will never stop caring for you."

"Now, now, stop that kind of talk," said her mother, fussing over her and tucking her into bed. "I'm making you a nice bowl of hot soup."

Later, from across the bay, the villagers saw jewel-bright, rainbow-colored clouds rising from Mount Meifeng. As the clouds drifted out to sea, everyone heard the sounds of heavenly drums and gongs. Mo Niang had



been right once again. The Silent One had floated to heaven in those colorful, musical clouds to become a guardian angel, watching forever over her family and friends and fisherfolk, far and near. 🐞

Author's Note "The Silent One" mixes fact, fiction, and legend to recount the life of Mo Niang, a popular Chinese deity, also known as Ma Zu (Ancestral Grandmother). Born in a small fishing village, Mo Niang was a wise woman, healer, and seer who is said to have studied religious literature from a young age and performed remarkable feats. Temples and shrines throughout the world honor Mo Niang as the heavenly guardian of fisherfolk, sailors, travelers, and explorers. Her birthday is celebrated in the spring with banners, boats, costumes, firecrackers, music, and special foods, including birthday noodles served with peanuts, egg, and seaweed.

SONG for the SAILING MOON

by Cynthia Porter

Sail on, round moon, on the high cloud-sea,
for a fair wind's up and a fair wind's free.
You can set your course when the first star flies,
you can fill your sails, you can sail the skies.
You can light the night while the sun's asleep,
for the night is long when the dark is deep.
While a fair wind's up and a fair wind's free,
sail on, round moon, on the high cloud-sea.

Part 1

MESSAGE in a BOTTLE

by Susan Dickinson

FOR HUNDREDS OF years scores of Boston-bound ships have foundered on the rocky ledges that lurk just beneath the waves all along the coast of Massachusetts Bay. The wreck of the brig *St. John* must surely be the most tragic of all. She was a “famine ship” out of Galway, packed full of hopeful youths and desperate families escaping the dire poverty rampant throughout Ireland during the Great Potato Famine of the 1840s. On October 7, 1849, after an uneventful month-long crossing of the North Atlantic, the *St. John* was hit by a grim nor’easter. She had just reached the entrance to Massachusetts Bay, so close to Boston that, the night before, Captain Oliver invited the passengers to light up the deck and share libations to celebrate the beginning of their new lives in America. It was indeed the end of their journey, but for most of them, the only new beginnings would be in the afterlife.

When dawn broke that morning, the crew of the *St. John* knew she was in trouble. Wind and waves prevented her from making any headway into the nearest sheltered harbor

IN IRELAND’S **GREAT POTATO FAMINE**, A BLIGHT DESTROYED THE CHIEF FOOD OF THE POOR. A MILLION PEOPLE DIED, AND MANY OTHERS EMIGRATED TO AMERICA ON “FAMINE SHIPS.”



Illustrated by Laura Bifano

to sit out the storm. Instead, she was driven up near Minot's Ledge, where the captain decided to drop anchor and wait, rather than chance sailing onto the rocky outcrop. But the anchors didn't hold, and the sails were shredding in the powerful winds. Helpless, the ship was soon tossed by the angry seas onto the rocks. In desperation, the crew cut down the masts and pitched them overboard, hoping to lighten the ship and thereby float it off the rocks. But to no avail. Monstrous waves relentlessly smashed down upon the little ship, breaking her back upon the rocks. Ice-cold water gushed into her crowded steerage, drowning many passengers immediately. Others managed to climb up onto the deck, only to be washed overboard into the killer surf.

Early risers in the seaside town of Cohasset that Sunday morning could plainly see the stricken ship, but they were helpless to assist. Any rescue attempt would surely end in death for those brave enough to man the lifeboats. Many on shore later reported hearing the unforgettable screams of terrified passengers above the hurricane roar of the wind. They said it took only fifty minutes for the sea to smash the ship to pieces. For the next several days, pulverized wreckage floated into Cohasset's beaches and coves, along with the macerated bodies of dozens of passengers.

These bodies—men, women, children, and babes, many with no identification—were solemnly collected by the townsfolk and buried in a long trench in or near the town's Central Cemetery. Slightly less than

half of the approximately ninety-nine victims of the wreck—the exact numbers have never been confirmed—are thought to be buried in Cohasset, though nowadays, even the site is uncertain. The rest of those presumed dead were never found. There were very few survivors. Sixty-odd years after the wreck, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, an Irish Catholic brotherhood, erected a memorial, a twenty-foot Celtic cross, on the highest point of the cemetery, a peaceful knoll from which you can see the beautiful yet treacherous sea that claimed so many poor souls that day.

IN 1849 CHRISTOPHER Dooley was fifteen, and the only living son of Clare and Patrick Dooley. The family lived in a tiny cottage in the middle of nowhere, halfway between the hamlet of Frankford and the Slieve Bloom Mountains in Kings County, Ireland. The nearest town of any size was Tullamore. But the only reason to go there was to drink, which Patrick often did. When he wasn't drinking, Patrick was cutting turf in the peat bogs that lie all around those parts, or arguing with Clare about money, or more accurately, the lack thereof. What little he made in the bogs, he spent in the pubs. Clare and their two children, with another on the way, lived miserably.

Christopher loved his Ma, but not his Da. He couldn't stand seeing his father mistreat his mother, and he was sick of the insults and kicks his father bestowed so freely upon him. He figured fifteen was old enough to do something about it. He wasn't about to

MACERATED MEANS BEATEN UP
AND WATERLOGGED.



PEAT IS COMPRESSED ORGANIC MATERIAL
FOUND IN BOGS. IT IS CUT OUT AND DRIED,
THEN USED AS FUEL FOR FIRES.

challenge his brutal father, but he was going to beat him just the same. He knew he could earn money for his Ma—real money, too, not just the pennies his father sweated over in that wretched bog. Christy, as his mother called him, had secretly decided to go to America, where fortunes could be had for the taking. He knew this on good authority from an itinerant tinker he'd met at Frankford. Christy firmly believed that his crooked spine—an impediment to any work except begging in Ireland—would not hold him back in America.

He was a clever boy, and despite no formal schooling, had learned to read and write so effortlessly that his mother dared to hope for him. But his Da could only see that his son was a “cripple.” Over the years, the impoverished Irishman and his anguished wife had buried one sickly infant after another, leaving only Christy and his little sister still alive. But he had nothing to offer his son except bile.

The curve in Christy's back first became noticeable when he was twelve. His mother saw it, and it broke her heart, for she knew there was nothing that could be done. So, unbeknownst to Patrick, Clare took in extra washing from the neighbors, and scrimped and saved her meager earnings until she had enough to buy a St. Christopher medal for her boy. She even had it engraved around the edge with his name. When Christopher took the sacrament of confirmation in the little church at nearby Ballyboy, Clare gave him the silver medal. St. Christopher was Christy's namesake, and his mother prayed daily to the saint to protect



her sweet son. St. Christopher was also the patron saint of travelers. It was as if Clare knew that someday her Christy would leave home. Silently, she hoped he might, for there was no future in King's County for any men except those with strong backs, capable of hard labor in the bogs.

Christy never told his Ma any of his plans. He feared it would just worry her. Instead, he charted his route secretly, at night, up in the loft where he slept. He figured he could hitch a ride on a farmer's wagon as far as Tullamore, and then join up with any west-going barge on the Grand Canal. Riding the barges, he'd eventually make his way to Limerick and the sea. True, he was penniless, but he hoped to earn his passage by doing whatever menial jobs the barge pilots might need. He wasn't sure how he'd get from Limerick up to Galway, where the famine ships departed, but he was confident he could figure it out once underway. And in Galway, he'd somehow sneak aboard a ship bound across the ocean. Even if it took him years, he'd get to America. And one day he'd come back a rich man, to look after his Ma.

BLACKIE MCCLURE WAS a great looming fellow, with jet-black hair and beard—a fine example of what the blond folk of the peatlands might call “Black Irish.” Blackie wasn't much older than Christy, but unlike the country lad, he'd grown up on the rough docks of Galway. His entire family had

died in a wave of fever that hit the town when Blackie was only nine. He'd survived disease, privation, and dockyard toughs for thirteen years, during which time he somehow grew to be a good-natured mountain of a man. He had little in common with the surprisingly bold and clever “wee hunchback,” as he called Christy, except a gnawing hunger to go to America. The unlikely duo became fast friends shortly after Christy arrived on the dock, sitting high and mighty on the back of a lumbering beer wagon.

For several years Blackie had saved his money, until he finally had enough to book a one-way passage on a ship to America. His mates had told him of a brig leaving for Boston in early September, and Blackie was determined to be on it. When he heard of Christy's desire to stow away on any ship that was heading to the new land, he encouraged the country boy to try for the *St. John*.

“If you can get aboard, lad, we'll be mates,” Blackie said. “You can stick with me while we're at sea, and we can stick together in America, too, you and me. I can look out for you, wee hunchback that you are, and you can teach me all about readin' and writin'.”

Christy agreed that this was a perfect arrangement. After several days of studying the comings and goings of people and ships at the Galway docks, his plan took shape. On the day of the *St. John*'s departure, he loitered among the crowd of passengers assembled on the dock, jostling for position to step onto the gangplank. In the chaos and



confusion occasioned by the boarding of one particularly large family with nine excited children, he made his move. He slipped in among the swarm of children as they noisily pushed their way onto the ship. It was almost

too easy. He knew that if he just hung around on the main deck, he'd eventually spot the towering Blackie, who'd take him under his wing. And that is exactly what happened. *to be continued*

I'M GLAD CHRISTY
FOUND A FRIEND.



MAYBE WHEN HE'S RICH IN AMERICA, HE'LL
MAIL THE SHIP OWNERS MONEY FOR HIS TICKET.
THAT'S WHAT ST. CHRISTOPHER WOULD DO!



Wherz my Gold!?

1	2	3		4		5	6	7
8						9		
10				11		12		
			13		14			
				15				16
			17				18	
19	20				21		22	
23						24		
25						26		

Solution on page 47

Irish
Skwawkie
in H:R
Sumwherr

Across

1. Word on a light switch
4. Neither here nor _____
8. Central Intelligence Agency (abbreviation)
9. March 17 is St. Patrick's _____
10. Poetic name for Ireland
12. "Once upon a _____"
13. Opposite of wrong
15. Germany (abbreviation)
17. Collies are used in Ireland to herd _____
19. Protection for a baseball catcher's hand
21. "When You and I _____ Young, Maggie"
23. "When Irish Eyes _____ Smiling"
24. Opposite of nay
25. Opposite of older
26. Half of twenty



WHAT A
PRETTY
RAINBOW! AND
UGLY'S NOT
EVEN LOOKING
AT IT.



HE DIDN'T EVEN
NOTICE HE'S
DIGGING UP A
PATCH OF FOUR-
LEAF CLOVERS!

Down

1. Ireland is in the Atlantic _____
2. Evergreen tree
3. "Simple Simon met a pieman,
Going to the _____"
5. Prepare for publication
6. Male sheep
7. Hole in a needle
11. "In winter I get up at _____
And dress by yellow candle light"
12. Past tense of throw
14. Expression of surprise, "_____ whiz!"
16. The Irish flag is _____, white, and orange
17. Irish _____ is made with meat and vegetables
18. _____ moss is used for fuel in Ireland
19. The Isle of _____ is in the Irish Sea
20. Ireland (abbreviation)
22. "If a body meet a body comin'
through the _____"

I'M OFF TO
PLAY IN THE
RAINBOW.
WHO'S WITH
ME?



TOD BUSY LOOKING
FOR A POT OF GOLD!
PROBABLY A LESSON IN
THERE, SOMEWHERE...

BY Kismet Harris &
Felicity Conahan



The Legend of Bottle Hill

An Irish Folk Tale

Retold by Kathleen M. Muldoon

Many Years Ago, Mick Purcell rented a shanty in the green hills of Ireland. 'Twas tucked away in a far corner of the farm where he worked. There he hoed and weeded from dawn to dusk while his wife, Molly, cared for the wee Purcells. But no matter how hard Mick worked, his family grew poorer, until one day they had neither a potato for the table nor a halfpenny for rent.

"Sure and I must be selling the cow," Mick said. He buried his face in his hands, lamenting the loss of his children's milk source.

"You best be gettin' a fair price, Mick Purcell," Molly warned as she gave him their last bit of bread for his journey.

Sunshine painted Mick's path. Larks sang such merry tunes that he whistled in spite of himself as he trudged up the great hill with

no name. At its peak he rested. He took the tiniest of naps, and when he awoke, an ugly little man stood by his side. His scrunched face looked older than Earth.

"Top o' the mornin'," he said in a hollow voice.

Shivers slithered down Mick's spine. Sure 'tis one of the fairies who lurks in the bogs and wood, he thought. He had heard tales of their evil tricks. He jerked the cow's rope and started down the hill, but the little man raced beside them.

"Where might ye be takin' the cow?"

"I'll be selling her at the fair," Mick replied.

"Sell her to me, Mick Purcell, and I will make you a rich man."

Mick's heart pounded. The wee man knew his name! His legs quivered like reeds in a storm.

HE TRADED HIS COW FOR
AN EMPTY BOTTLE?



HE SHOULD HAVE HELD
OUT FOR MAGIC BEANS.

"Begone, ye devil!" he cried.

The little creature pulled an empty bottle from his coat. "'Tis your payment, Mick Purcell."

Mick gasped. "An empty bottle?"

The man grabbed Mick's jacket with his gnarled hand. He yanked till Mick's face was inches from his own.

"Take the bottle home, Mick Purcell. Tell your wife to sweep clean the cottage and lay the table. Then put the bottle on it and say, 'Bottle, do your job.'"

Mick opened his mouth, but no words came out. The ugly little man shoved the bottle into Mick's hand, grabbed the rope, and led the cow away. Mick sobbed. How would he face Molly and his hungry children? Sure and Molly would kill him! Slowly he retraced his steps to the cottage. He shuffled inside and told Molly what he'd done.

"You fool!" Molly screeched. "Giving the cow to a hooligan! Are we to eat an empty bottle?"

She tried to hurl it across the room, but Mick stopped her. He begged her to obey the little man's instructions.

"Maybe 'tis magic," he said.

Molly frowned and grumbled. But she grabbed a broom and furiously swept the cottage. Then she spread a ragged, patched cloth on the table. Mick put the bottle on it, and he and Molly stepped back. The children huddled behind them.

"Bottle, do your job," Mick whispered.

WHOOOOOSHHH! Two wee people exploded from the bottle. They said not a word

as they loaded the table with gold plates and cups. From the air they plucked platters of meat, potatoes, and fruits. Soon the cottage smelled like a royal dining hall. With a *POOF!* the wee ones returned to the bottle, but when Mick picked it up seconds later, it was empty. He corked the bottle and placed it on the mantel.

That night the Purcells went to bed with full tummies. Mick and Molly feared they might awake to find that they had dreamed their riches. But in the morning, sunlight bathed each golden plate. Mick sold one in town for a great deal of money.

Soon the Purcells had sold every plate and cup and had become very rich indeed. The cupboard that once stood empty was now stuffed with enough bread and potatoes for all of Ireland. Mick and Molly stowed away their money in bags beneath their bed. Although they tried keeping their riches secret, the villagers learned of their wealth.

One day the landlord came for the rent.

"And how came the likes of you, Mick Purcell, to be payin' the rent with gold?" he demanded.

A cup of rich grape wine had loosened Mick's tongue. He told the landlord all about the ugly little man and the magic bottle. The landlord begged Mick to sell him the bottle.

"Are ye thinking I'm a moron?" cried Mick with a mighty laugh.

But the landlord persisted. "There's something ye be needing more than money, Mick Purcell," he said. "I'll trade you this farm and the pretty pastures around it for that bottle, I will."

OK, BOTTLE, DO YOUR JOB.
MAKE ME RICH!



I THINK YOU NEED TO
TAKE OFF THE CAP.

Mick hesitated. His family did have all the money they needed. But imagine living on the farm rent-free!

Molly punched him.

"Give it to him!" she hissed.

Mick sighed, then handed the bottle to the landlord.

That night the Purcells danced around the table.

"We're rich, we're rich!" they chanted.

Mick and Molly were certain that they would never again be poor. But bit by bit they squandered away their money. There came another day when they had nothing but a sparse potato patch and a skinny cow.

"What shall we do?" cried Molly.

"We're hungry!" wept the half-grown Purcells.

"Sure and I'll take the cow to the great hill and get another bottle from the wee man," Mick promised.

On this day, the larks did not sing. The sun hid behind a bank of rain clouds. But when Mick reached the top of the hill, he met the ugly little man. Before Mick could speak, the little man grabbed his coat.



"So, Mick Purcell, you are no longer rich?" he snarled.

Mick hung his head. He explained all that had happened.

"Would ye be trading me just one more bottle for this fine cow?" he pleaded.

"Are you thinking you deserve another chance, Mick Purcell?"

A tear trickled down Mick's cheek.

PHODEY! THIS BOTTLE
ISN'T MAGIC.





"'Tisn't for me," he said. "'Tis for my wee ones."

A horrible scowl crept over the little man's face. But he reached into his great coat and took out a bottle.

"Here's what ye deserve, Mick Purcell," he growled, thrusting the bottle into Mick's hand.

Without another word, the little man grabbed the skinny cow's rope and led it away.

Mick raced home. He whistled and stomped as he entered the cottage.

"Sure and 'tis another bottle!" Molly cried.

She and the children joined hands and danced a merry jig. Then Molly swept the floor and covered the table. Mick set down the bottle.

"Bottle, do your job!" he ordered.

A terrible roar shook the walls. From the bottle sprang two enormous men swinging clubs. They smashed the table. They beat Molly and Mick and the children. Then, after destroying everything in the room, they disappeared into the bottle. Mick leaped from the floor and corked it.

"Begorra!" cried Mick. "Sure and the little man cursed us!"

"Now we shall starve!" moaned Molly Purcell.

"Oh no, we shan't!" Mick said. "I've got some tricks of my own, I have."

He grabbed the bottle and rushed to the landlord's home. He arrived in the midst of a great feast. Smells of roast lamb floated through the door and tickled his nose.

"I've brought you another bottle," Mick told the landlord. "Sure 'twill make you a hundred times richer than the other. I'll trade you this one for my old bottle."

The landlord howled. "And you think me a fool like you, Mick Purcell?"

"Let me in, and I'll show you," Mick persisted.

He followed him to the great dining room. There he placed the bottle on the table and uncorked it. Then he stood back.

"Bottle, do your job," he sang.


Two brutes rushed from the bottle, screaming like banshees. They smashed the tables and golden plates. They beat the landlord, his servants, and guests.

"Stop them!" shouted the landlord.

"I shall when I'll be getting my bottle," Mick Purcell replied.

The landlord reached into a cupboard, yanked out the original bottle, and threw it to Mick, who clutched it to his breast and ran from the landlord's house. He ignored the yelps and thumps and cries behind him as he crossed the grassy fields and headed home.

No One Ever saw Mick Purcell or any of the Purcells again. Some folks claimed that they packed up, moved, and became the richest family in Ireland.

The villagers named the great hill "Bottle Hill." Today, visitors to its lush green peak are bound to hear the story of how one day a farmer named Mick Purcell was just as tricky as the wee people who lurked in the bogs and woods. 



The PEARL DIVERS of TOBA COVE

by Miyuki Jane Pinckard

WE'VE ALWAYS LIVED by the sea, and every sunrise is different.

Today is an early spring dawn, delicate pink like inside a snail shell. My sisters and I row our small boat over the choppy waves. Oba, my aunt, stands at the stern. The wind off the ocean is cold, but it can't dampen my excitement. This is the first time I'm diving for real, and not for practice.

"Tama, pay attention," Oba says to me.

"Sorry, Oba." I lay my oar down inside the boat.

We strip down to our loincloths, and one by one, stand at the prow to fall backward into the water. We each have a basket that we

leave floating on the surface. At day's end our baskets will hold treasures we've found: sea cucumber, abalone, clams, mussels, oysters, seaweed, sea urchins.

But I'm looking for a pearl. A pearl would mean Sae could come back.

Sae is my oldest sister, and she lives far away, in Toyko.

I remember the night she decided to leave. It was Tanabata, and the whole village was out enjoying the summer evening on the rocky beach. We sat around a fire roasting mussels and mackerel. The fish skin crisped and crackled with a salty, mouth-watering smell.

TANABATA
IS A SUMMER
FESTIVAL
CELEBRATING
THE MEETING
OF TWO
CELESTIAL
DEITIES WHO
ARE SEPARATED
THE REST OF
THE YEAR.



Illustrated by Ying-Fang Shen

text © 2023 by Jane Pinckard, art © 2023 by Ying-Fang Shen



Oba said, “Sae, you’re almost skilled enough to become a trainer yourself.”

Okan, my mother, scoffed. “Train who? No one wants to do this anymore, there’s no money in it.” She looked at Sae, and her eyes softened. “We’ll all have to find other ways to make a living someday.”

Sae laughed. When she laughed, I always wanted to laugh with her. Her eyes and teeth gleamed in the soft dusk light, and she looked so pretty in her favorite blue yukata. “I’ll find a pearl,” she said. “You’ll see. People would pay good money for a handpicked pearl from Toba Cove.”

If anyone could find a pearl, Sae could.

Okan said, “You might want more from life, eventually. Marriage, children, maybe, or freedom to go wherever you want. The sea might not be enough.” Okan looked around at us. “Maybe not for any of you.”

Sae said quietly, “Not for you, Okan?”

“Doesn’t matter about me,” our mother said.

Sae didn’t say anything, but she stared into the fire. When summer ended, Sae packed up her yukata and we walked with her to the train station and waved goodbye.

Every time I write her, I ask her when she’s coming home. She sends me funny stories about her life but she doesn’t answer that question.

I TAKE A deep breath and dive.

Since I was little, I’ve loved going underwater. It feels like I belong here. Early morning light barely penetrates, and this

world feels dreamy, like anything can happen. Thick kelp strands rise around me, and I kick to go deeper. A few feet below me I see a shadow—my sister Kai, prying a shell from a rock. She’s always been quick, and her eyes are sharp. She pulls shells into the bag tied to her waist.

I wish I could lose myself in this floating feeling. Is this what it’s like to fly? I could stay down here forever. If I could breathe underwater, I’d explore the depths for hours, making friends with dolphins and eels.

A turtle swims past me, waving its fin as if saying hello. I wonder where it lives. Does it have sisters swimming nearby? It nibbles at some kelp. Its face is so sweet, and it keeps looking at me, like it’s curious about me, too. Turtles live a long time, and I wonder how old it is.

Kai swishes past me. I’ve wasted too much time! I’ve got to focus. I face down again to go deeper when the turtle jerks. It’s gotten wrapped up in some kelp, and its fins flop in panic.

I take my knife from my belt. The turtle is rolling wildly, and I don’t want to scare it, so I work as quickly as I can to cut it loose. My lungs ache. I let out a little stream of bubbling air. I’m almost done.

There! I push the turtle out of the tangle. It looks back at me, as if saying thank you, before it swims away. My whole chest hurts now. I’ve been so stupid. I shouldn’t have stayed down so long. I push myself toward the surface.



My lungs burn. My fingers tingle with pinpricks. My vision gets dark around the edges, as if I'm going into a dark cave, and for an instant I forget which way is up and which way is down.

Focus, I tell myself, and kick again, strong and sure.

My head breaks the surface, and I gulp down the fresh air.

Oba watches me. "Tama?" she says, a question on her face.

"I'm fine," I gasp.

Next to me, Kai is putting shells into her basket. She looks at my empty one and laughs. "What's the matter, Tama? Couldn't find anything?" She takes another deep breath and dives.

My sister Taki casts me a pitying look. "You'll get better, Tama. Maybe you should rest." She puts four giant abalone into her basket. They are magnificent, and I know Oba sees them and is pleased.

Oba calls from the boat. "Do you need a break?"

"No." I suck in the biggest breath I can and dive again.

THERE'S A STORY Oba likes to tell.

Once, a long time ago, there was a young fisherman named Urashima Taro who lived at the edge of the ocean. One day, he hadn't caught anything all morning, and he was about to give up when his line caught a small turtle.

"What luck!" he thought. "This can be dinner tonight."

But the turtle looked at him with such sad eyes that Taro felt sorry for it and let it go. He went home to his mother empty-handed.

The next morning when Taro returned to his boat, a giant turtle waited for him. "Yesterday you saved the Dragon Princess," the turtle said. "As thanks, she's invited you to her palace under the sea."

Taro was very surprised. "Thank you, but I can't breathe underwater."

"I will give you magic gills."

Taro agreed and jumped on the turtle's back. They dove deep into the ocean, deeper than any human had gone before. At the bottom of the ocean lay a palace shimmering with mother-of-pearl and gold. The Dragon Princess herself waited at the gates. She led him inside where he was offered delicious dishes and sweet wine. All the citizens of the underwater city came to celebrate.

"You are an honorable man," the Dragon Princess said. "Please stay here with us."

Dazzled by her beauty and the luxury around him, he agreed. They fell in love and got married, and he lived there for three blissful years.

One day he said to the Dragon Princess, "I'm worried about my mother. I left her all alone, and she's getting older. I'd like to go see her."

The Dragon Princess was sad to let him go. She handed him a small box. "Whatever you do, don't open it."

"I promise," said Taro.

They said goodbye, and the large turtle took Taro home.



Back on the rocky beach, Taro ran to his little house. "Okan will be so worried about me," he thought to himself. "I hope she's all right."

But he couldn't find his house anywhere. The village looked so different that he got lost. He spotted an old man who sat mending his net on the pier and asked, "Oji, do you know where Urashima Taro lives?"

The old man frowned. "Never heard of him."

In despair Taro wept on the rocky beach, all alone. Then he remembered the little box the princess gave him.

This is the part of the story where, whenever Oba tells it, I shout, "Don't open the box!"

But he opened the box, because of course he did. I don't know what was inside it, but in an instant his hair turned white, a long white beard sprouted on his chin, his back bent, and he was transformed into an old, old man. He didn't realize it, but in the space of his three years underwater, three hundred years had passed on the shore. Everyone he'd known was long gone.

"But why did he open the box?" I asked Oba the first time I heard this story.

Oba shrugged. "Maybe he was curious."

"What does the story mean?"

"I think it means, you can leave your home, but can you come back?"

"Of course, you can," I said.

"Time for bed," Oba said.

WHEN THE SUN is high, we take a break from diving, and I'm glad because I'm tired. Oba unwraps *onigiri* and a jar of pickles, and we sit in the boat and eat. Kai's basket brims over with mussels and cockles, and I look at the pitiful scattering of sea snails in mine. It's not enough. I need to find that pearl.



Oba looks over at clouds gathering in the west. "Rain's coming," she says. "That's enough for today."

"Just one more hour," I say.

"There's always tomorrow," Taki says. She offers me the rest of her onigiri.

We pick up our oars to row home.

The sun warms my back. The waves lap against the boat, and sea gulls cry near the shore. It feels good to row in rhythm with my sisters and hear their voices as they chatter about their evening plans. I close my eyes, thinking about the story. Taro shouldn't have opened the box. He could have gone back to the Dragon Princess, who loved him. He didn't have to get old, trapped in a village that didn't remember him.

Maybe that's why Sae didn't come home. She'd made friends. Her life in the city sounded exciting. Maybe she felt like Taro in the palace, and a pearl wouldn't be enough to bring her home.

I open my eyes and I'm glad I'm not crying, even though part of me feels like it.

"Look, Okan's here," Taki says.

"What is she holding?" Kai asks, shading her eyes against the sun with her hand.

Okan stands at the edge of the beach waving a sheet of thin rice paper.

"It must be a letter from Sae!" Taki says. We pull on the oars, eager to get to shore.


Okan helps us drag the boat up onto the beach. Her face glows like a lantern. "Sae's coming to visit next month."

Kai and Taki squeal, and they grab the letter and read it, their heads together. My

happiness flutters inside me like a dragonfly in a jar I can't quite let out yet. I help Oba and Okan, putting the oars in place, pulling the tarp over. As my sisters and mother and grandmother walk toward home, I turn back to look out at the sea. Today it looks like it goes on forever, like it hides mysteries under its silvery surface. There's a pearl still out there, somewhere, I know there is. Maybe I'll find it, maybe I won't. Either way the sea will be there, different every day but also the same.

Urashima Taro had no one left to remember him. Sae has us.

"Tama!" My mother's voice calls.

"Coming!" I run to join them. 





WINNERS NOVEMBER 2022 POETRY CONTEST Wish

First prize 10 and under

Lulu Jones, age 9
Bowling Green, KY

Their Wishes

The kitten sits by the fire,
Wishing for a mouse.

The horse lies down in the stables,
Wishing for some hay.

The dog dozes in the bed,
Wishing for a bone.

The bunny burrows down into its nest,
Wishing for some carrots.

The little girl asleep in her bed
Wishes for peace in the world.

First prize 10 and under

Rory O'Donnell, age 10
Lincoln, NE

Once upon a cold Thanksgiving
there is no time for misgiving
The greatest day is yet to behold
and so with that let the story unfold

Every single plate was full
'cause everyone was hopeful
that on the plate there was a space
where the turkey took its mighty place

Then the silver platter comes
Alas! the hostess is all thumbs!
When the lid flips—steaming, stunning,
the turkey leaps out—panicked, running

Guests aghast, scream at last
People running, dashing past
Granny's teeth on the floor
We're all sprinting for the door, then . . .

Aunty Rose drew up close
and took the turkey by its nose
with it finally released
everyone was at peace

Little Jane declares a toast
to all of them she loves the most
Even though there's no main dish
everyone got their wish . . .

to have the best Thansgiving ever!

First prize 11 and up

Laura Civillico, age 14
Damascus, MD

Santa's Annual Crime

Each year, he comes—
Silently.

Each year, he tiptoes
into my house—
Violently.

Quite honestly, I sincerely doubt
That it is desirable to have some fat guy
wandering about!

While we all sleep unawares,
He could be climbing up the stairs!
Stealing our milk, cookies, sense of safety.

I think Santa's been out of touch lately
With life in the *real world*, not at the North Pole.
He doesn't get it—he lives in the cold with his elves
and his coal!

The rest of us need our security
Not an obligation to deal with his immaturity!
For who but he takes pleasure in breaking and entering?!

Seems like Santa Claus needs a fair bit of lecturing.
Because of these grievances, because of these fears
I wish for only one thing this year—
Not a gift of any sort—
Just a date and a time for Santa Claus in court!

Second prize 10 and under

Samuel Jiang-Yu, age 9
Hingham, MA

The Wind in My Hair

Tomorrow is Christmas,
There's a coldness in the air,
The air is very chilly,
The trees are very bare.

In my bed, with the snow falling down,
I catch a movement on my window.
There's still silence in the town. It's Christmas,
I remember,
And I tiptoe downstairs, keeping the sound low.

I hide behind the big clock,
And I hear a low scratching sound very near.
Santa comes out of the fireplace, and just as I fear,
He sees me, yes, and says, "Hello, dear."

He puts down his presents
And to my delight
Invites me to ride
On his reindeer tonight.

The reindeer prance up into the sky,
And behind me billows my hair.
Santa drops presents down every chimney,
As we glide through the cold air.

As we go toward my house, Santa smiles at me.
"Visit me next time, my dear."
It is getting close, so I hope he'll be there,
Once again, I want to feel the wind in my hair.

Second prize 11 and up

June Dowdell, age 11
Meridian, MS

Fairy Tale Wishes

I wish to live in a fairy book,
In the land of laughter, and magic, too!
Where people can change their skins at will
And make from a stone a marvelous stew.

I'd play croquet with the Queen of Hearts,
Make like the spoon, run away with the fork.
I'd swap riddles with Gollum, find a ring,
Ride a dragon, battle an Orc.

I'd fly to Neverland over the sea,
Watch a tortoise outrun a hare.
I'd see the emperor walk through the streets,
Blissfully foolish, his body quite bare.

I'd duel to the death with a six-fingered man.
I'd watch a lamppost grow like a tree.
I'd ride on a ship to the end of the world.
I'd set a little house elf free.

But now I must live in the world of mundane.
Alas! that that wonderful wish is not true,
For only in ink can a spell be performed,
And only in ink can a heart be made new.

Third prize 10 and under

Claire Leichtner, age 9
Wynnewood, PA

The Snowy Times

The sound we hear from animals.
The leaves piled high, not low.
This fall for the holidays,
I wish for it to snow!

I love that tingly feeling
when snowflakes touch my face.
When icy cold drops hit my tongue,
they've found the perfect place!

Don't forget the trail that snowflakes
take from clouds to ground.
The path is left with a magic wave
that all the flakes have found!

When all the snowflakes fall,
a snow blanket lies on the floor.
The blanket works for sledding, snow fights,
snowmen, and much more!

This season's very special,
and when the sun shall rise,
I will be very happy
to see snow as my surprise!

Third prize 10 and under

Clementine Swenson-Immoor, age 10
Orcas, WA

Wish

A wish,
A fantastical thing,
Doesn't need to wait
For a charm to sing,
Nor a spell to say,
Or the right
Time of day.

Nor for a wishing well
Or a falling star,
You can speak your wish
Right where you are.



A wish,
A magical thing,
And needn't wait
For a wishing ring,
For a sparkling spring,
Nor a dandelion flower,
Or the 11:11 hour.
You can speak your wish
At any hour,
But what you do,
All determines
Whether it
Will come true.

Third prize 11 and up

Lauren Aalfs, age 13
Frankston, TX

Wishes

You can wish upon a shooting star.
It's almost like a spell.
You get a wish if you toss
A coin into a well.
And if you blow dandelion seeds
Up into the air
Or if you pass a horse of white

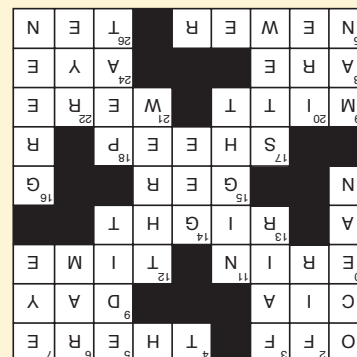
The wish is yours, I swear.
A leprechaun can grant you three
If there is one that you can seize.
And if a ladybug lands upon your hand,
Blow her back into the breeze.
One last wish I think I'll tell,
Simply stare at the darkening sky,
When you see the first star blink into sight,
Say a wish; it's yours, no lie.

Honorable Mention

Tang Li, age 10, Palmetto Bay, FL
Madeline Male, age 14, Fairway, KS
Sophia Matus, age 12, Wilmington, NC
Elayna Sharrow, age 12, San Antonio, TX
Lucy Thienes, age 10, Idaho Falls, ID

To see more winning Cricket League
entries, visit our website:
cricketmagkids.com/contests

Solution to Crossbird Puzzle



NEW POETRY CONTEST: SEE THE SEA

The ocean. What a vast, beautiful, mysterious, and sometimes dangerous place. This *Cricket* takes you on many adventures over and under the sea. So, prepare to get your feet wet! For this month's contest, everybuggy would love to read you best poem about the sea.

Will you write about drifting peacefully on your rubber raft during summer vacation? Or walking barefoot along an ocean shore, gathering shells and playing tag with the waves? Perhaps you will write about people who make their living from the sea, like "The Pearl Divers of Toba Cove." Or about someone bravely navigating a stormy sea in the age of sail, like Ellen aboard the *Flying Cloud*, or crossing the ocean to emigrate to a new land, like Christy in "Message in a Bottle." You might write about being shipwrecked, or a daring rescue at sea like in "The Silent One." Or about creatures, real or from mythology, who live in the sea. You might even imagine an underwater city like the home of the Dragon Princess, or having the ability to breathe underwater.

Whether you write about penguins frolicking in icy waters, traveling to the bottom of the sea on a scientific expedition, or encountering a polka-dotted sea serpent, everybuggy in Cricket Country will be gathering at the mailbox in their swim fins and goggles, waiting to dive into your best poem—of 24 lines or fewer, please—about the sea.

Contest Rules

1. Your contest entry must be your very own original work. Ideas and words should not be copied.
2. Your entry *must* be signed by your parent or guardian, stating that it is your own work, that no help was given, and that *Cricket* has permission to publish it in the magazine and on our website.
3. Be sure to include your name, age, and full address on your entry.
4. Only one entry per person, please.
5. If you want your work returned, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for each entry.
6. Your entry must be received by March 25, 2023.
7. Send entries to **Cricket League**, P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354. (No faxes or email submissions, please!)
8. We will publish winning entries in the July/August 2023 issue and on the *Cricket* website.

Acknowledgments continued from inside front cover

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Printed in the United States of America.

1st Printing Quad
Sussex, Wisconsin February 2023



GO AROUND THE WORLD in eighty days? Impossible! In 1873, science fiction author Jules Verne had written a novel about that, but it was just a fantasy. Sixteen years later, the editors of a New York City newspaper, the *World*, wondered if now it really could be done. They assigned the experiment to their star reporter. If anyone could do it, she could. She? Yes, a young woman of twenty-two: Elizabeth Cochrane, who wrote under the pen name “Nellie Bly.”



Nellie Bly in her traveling outfit

Born in Pennsylvania in 1867, Nellie took impossibilities in stride. When only eighteen, she wrote a letter championing women’s rights and sent it to a Pittsburgh newspaper editor. She so impressed him that he hired her immediately, at a time when most journalists were men. Later, Nellie joined the *World* staff and quickly became one of the nation’s top investigative reporters, famous for her courage in calling attention to social problems. Once, she pretended to be a thief and got herself arrested so that she could report on how police treated female prisoners. Another time, she had herself locked up in a mental hospital. Her account of that terrible experience brought about much-needed reforms.

But could she circle the globe in eighty days? She set off from New York to find out. By ships, trains, horse carts, rickshaws, and sometimes riding a donkey, she returned to her starting point. Time: seventy-two days, six hours, eleven minutes!

Her greatest accomplishment, however, was to help open the way for all of today’s women journalists. What was Nellie’s most exciting story? I’d say it was the story of her own life.

Old Cricket



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March 2023

Volume 50

Number 6

cricketmedia.com

\$6.95

